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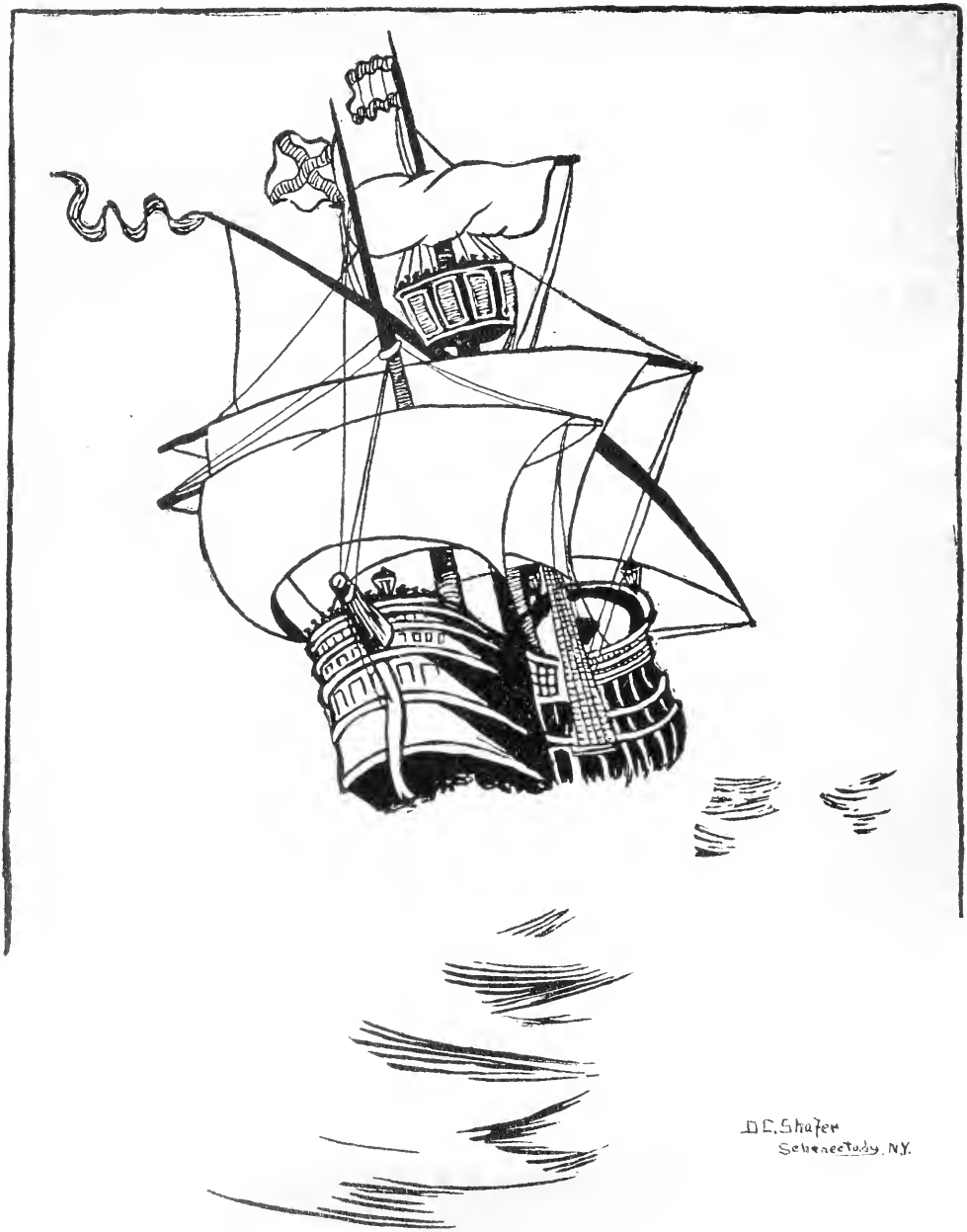
STORIES OF AN OLD DUTCH TOWN

DON CAMERON SHAFER



D.C. Shafer
Schenectady, N.Y.

STORIES OF AN OLD DUTCH TOWN

In Verse By

DON. CAMERON SHAFER

ROBSON & ADEE, Publishers
Schenectady, New York

Jan. 28, 1909
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by
Robert Adam

FOREWORD

These stories of old Schenectady have been carefully selected from the traditions, legends and folk-lore of the Holland Dutch who so early established the frontier city of Schenectady, N. Y. The bits of humor come down to this generation through histories, letters, newspaper files, and by word of mouth and while they may not, fitted as they are into the more rigid forms of verse, caress the imagination so blithely as though written in prose there can be no doubt but these are the very incidents which the early inhabitants of the old Dutch town loved to recall over their cups or after one of their famous Dutch dinners.

DON. CAMERON SHAFER.

September 9, 1908.

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The Tom-he-nick Wedding

Author's Note.— In the early days of Schenectady there were no resident ministers and the duties of the church were performed by "circuit riders," ministers who rode through the country holding services, marriages, funerals, etc.

H. young Tyerck Honokel de Graf was Dutch—
As his name would doubtless imply.
He lived on the bank of Tom-he-nick creek,
On his little farm by the **Vlie*.
Now all Glenville knew young Tyerck was in love
With a maid on a nearby farm.
This Dutch lassie's name was Ternise Von Bolt—
A maiden of beauty and charm.
'T is needless to say Tyerck's love she returned,
For he had both land and a cow:
So when he proposed (in Low Dutch of course)
She promised to be his *†goede Vrouw*.

She promised to be his good wife and true—
To live in the little log cot,
Whene'er a preacher rode in from Ft. Orange,
To tie the hymeneal knot.
The day came at last—as wedding days do—
The parson had been notified.
Young Tyerck, in homespun, sat moody and glum,
Holding tight the hand of his bride,
And watching the clouds on *Tower Ernie* hill—
In truth it had rained all the week;
They were wondering if the parson dare ride
O'er the ford in Tom-he-nick creek.

* Swamp or marshy lake.
† Good wife.

While they were watching they spied a lean nag
A-jogging along down the road.
Mounting the Rev. Harmanus Van Bradt,
As gaunt as the beast he bestrode.
Down to the ford rode the Rev. Van Bradt—
The Tom-he-nick raged like the sea
Between the lovers and marital bliss:
Robbing the parson of his fee.
"Hello!" yells the Rev. Van Bradt, "Hello!
I can't make the ford it is plain.
You better postpone your wedding, I say
Next month I will ride here again!"

"[illegible], good father," cried Jeannise, [illegible]
[illegible] swain
[illegible] cannot wait.
[illegible] may rain
[illegible] his fee—
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] the creek
[illegible] Van Bradt
[illegible]
[illegible] came [illegible] back
[illegible]
[illegible] prayer for their souls
[illegible] the pride.
[illegible] some [illegible] of gold
[illegible] his ride.

The Dutchman Who Would a Hunting Go

ONCE upon an autumn morning
Sallied forth one Jans Van Corning,
With dog and gun to hunt along the Mohawk shore.
He was a Holland weaver lad,
But had the hunting fever bad,
Though he had ne'er been gunning in his life before.

"Oh, it's deer meat you'll be buying,"
Yelled his comrades, just to guy him,
When they saw Jans passing with little dog and gun.
"Don't let bears or panthers scratch ye,
Or the horrid Redskins catch ye!"
They yelled, "be sure you're headed homeward when you shoot!"

But these jokes and jibes sardonic
Could not stop this young Teutonic,
For Jans just hurried on as though he did not care.
As he walked along he muttered:
"I'll just show them once," he sputtered,
"That I'm a hunter if I meet a lion or bear!"

The big wood was dark and dreary,
Every shadow made Jans "skeery;"
He held his gun ready despite his shaking knees.
The faithful dog walked well in front,
For he actually liked to hunt,
And wasn't 'fraid of anything that walked beneath the trees

Now, when Jans stopped to take account,
He saw a savage catamount,
Standing quite suspiciously on a ledge of rock.
The Dutchman sneaks a trifle up
And brings his trusty rifle up,
Shuts his eyes completely and fires the old flint-lock.

With a tremendous rumbling roar,
The gun kicks Jans a-tumbling o'er
Upon his broad Dutch back beneath the green [illegible] tree.
With an awful [illegible]
[illegible] catamount a-crawling
To spring upon the victim of that Dutch fusee.

With a screechy shrieking yowling,
All a-snarling and a-growling,
Leaps the panther to the man strawling in the creek.
Then the little dog precocious
[illegible] the catamount ferocious,
[illegible] fastened his strong teeth deep in the varmint's neck.

[illegible] a-scratching, dog a-biting,
Towards Jans they rolled a-fighting;
[illegible] was slain without help the dog would die in the trail.
As they tumbles o'er the Dutchman
Jans just makes a hurried clutch and
Grabs the snarling panther by his long and furry tail.

"Sic him, Toby!" yells Jans. "Sic him,
Till I get where I can kick him:
This is the queerest fix I was ever in.

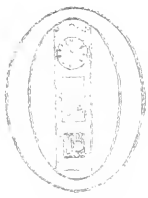
But I'll hold him while you choke him:
Or I find something to soak him—
Heads or tails I wonder which one of us will win!"

Just then Jans finds a hickory club
And plays a merry rub-a-dub
On that big panther's ribs until it gasps for breath;
'Til its whole nine lives are lifeless,
And it's powerful claws are strifeless
And the cat's stretched out on the ground quite cold in death.

Never lived a hunter prouder—
Never yelled a Dutchman louder
Than Jans Van Corning when he saw he'd killed the beast:
"Won't those loafer's be astounded,
And just a wee bit confounded,"
Says he, "they'll be surprised to see a lion, at least!"

Walking along quite breezily,
Carrying his game quite easily,
Came Jans Van Corning down the little village street.
Every Dutchman who laughed at him—
Every *Burgher* who chafed at him,
Drank his beer hurriedly and beat a quick retreat.

The Jolly Old Host of Glenville



H, Captain John Sanders, old-fashion "Judge" Sanders,
The jolly old host of Glenville;
His mansion commanding in Scotia is standing
Across from the old Bignehill.
But each time-stained rafter
Which echoed the laughter
Of those ancient days is now still.

[illegible] Sanders, this fun-loving Sanders,
Gave many a party and ball.
[illegible] and neighbors invited
[illegible] large dining hall.
Every matron and maid,
Every dashing young blade,
[illegible] John Sanders would call.

[illegible] those [illegible] Dr. [illegible]
[illegible] the candle's [illegible]
[illegible] laughter beguiling.
[illegible] everything [illegible]
[illegible] old-fashion [illegible]
[illegible] whisky [illegible]
[illegible] folks below

[illegible] the guests were far dancing
[illegible]
[illegible] "General Peet"
[illegible] under his arm.
[illegible] currying—
[illegible] and scurrying,
[illegible] and charm.

And off in one corner, the figures a-calling,
In his chair swayed old "General Peet":
His black arm a-shaking the music a-making
In time for the fast gliding feet.
His black eyes a-twinkle
And black face a-wrinkle,—
Entranced with the music so sweet.

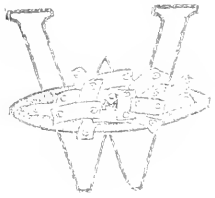
"Hunting Squirrel", "Old Sushy-a" and "Turkey in Straw"
With other old favorites he played:
While the "Judge" of Glenville led a pretty quadrille,
With a blushing Schenectady maid
From the old-fashion "set"
To stately minuets,
The dancing was never delayed.

All matrons a-yawning and tall clocks a-striking
The dancers would cease their gay whirls,
While garments a-seeking the gallants were speaking
If they might go home with the girls.
Each lover and sweetheart
With "good-night" would depart
Mid laughter and tossing of curls.

Oh, Captain John Sanders, old-fashion "Judge" Sanders
Peace be to your ashes, I say.
The mansion commanding alone is still standing
To tell of the company so gay.
Jolly comrades and slaves
Have been long in their graves—
And silent for many a day.

How The Dutch Made Money

[illegible] Note [illegible] the scarcity of small money in 1790 [illegible] the [illegible] officials issued "church money" as a circulating medium. This paper money was printed by C. R. and G. Webster of Albany in one, two, three and fourpence notes. Later a sixpence and one and two shilling notes were issued. They were guaranteed by the [illegible] and were exchanged [illegible]



They could not bring raw skins to church,
Or vegetables and such.
In fact this monetary question
Did fair to "beat the Dutch",
'Til Deacons of the First Reformed,
(The pastor's pay was due.)
Met one September afternoon
In Van Slyck's Inn at two.

With well-filled pipes they sat and thought
In silence long and drear.
And then they thought some more and smoked,
And eke they drank some beer.
Then finally agreed on a plan,
A goodly scheme and true,
Whereby the church would get some cash—
The Domine his due.

One rode to Albany next day,
Before the morning sun;
At Webster's ancient printery
He had some printing done.
Soon paper money, crisp and fresh,
Was issued on the street—
And the panic fold'd up its tents
And made a quick retreat.

From one pence up to three and four,
In colors new and bright;
Then a crinkly paper six-pence,
The first time saw the light.
The people left with those church folk
Their coin of yellow gold,
And got it changed to paper script
Their credit to uphold.

The Language of Holland is Dead

THE Dutch that we spoke in our youth,
Like those ancient costumes grown sere,
Sounded simple, vulgar, uncouth,
To the Yankee invader's ear.
The New England tradesmen would sneer,
At every Dutch word that was said,
We halt now to drop but a tear—
The language of Holland is dead.

They tell of a Dutchman, forsooth,
Who would not learn English for fear
It would spoil his Dutch, and, in truth,
He bragg'd of his Mother 'Tongue here.
But he sailed to Holland one year
And he found he talked dialect instead;
Full of Mohawk, guttural and queer—
The language of Holland was dead.

The Yankees who came here made ruth
Of a language fallen and drear,
English they spoke in mart and booth,
And Holland Dutch met with a jeer:—
They wanted it to disappear
In school it was English they read,
In cities and on the frontier—
The language of Holland is dead.

L'Envoy

It's English we all like to hear
When other old dialects have fled.
Now no one is sorry, 't is clear,
The language of Holland is dead.

Justice Van Der Donk's Daughter

SUNDAY, with the old-time Dutch [illegible]
The work and pleasure [illegible] the week were [illegible]
For they were forbidden by the rigid laws of [illegible]
And every [illegible] Sabbath sought his pew
To listen to the preaching or to sleep, perhaps:
Then [illegible] homeward to his old clay pipe and [illegible]
But those who [illegible] church could [illegible] the King [illegible]
For [illegible] upon [illegible] Sabbath [illegible]

[illegible] forth a pack
Of jewelry and [illegible] upon his [illegible]
[illegible] his numerous wares [illegible]
Then homeward started he with pockets filled with [illegible]
[illegible] Schenectady came he on a Sabbath [illegible]
[illegible] Dutch [illegible] Yankee [illegible]
[illegible] Dutch [illegible] of the [illegible] say,
[illegible] Sabbath [illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible] for [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] in the summer air
[illegible] was his daughter [illegible]

"What [illegible] Sunday [illegible]" the stern Justice [illegible]
"I've [illegible] going home," the peddler replied.

Famous [illegible]

"H'm-m-m", growled the Dutchman, with a fearful frown,
"You want to bring God's wrath upon this peaceful town!
You stop here 'til tomorrow, else you go to jail,
Then you make a cloud of dust down the Ft. Orange trail."
Now this penalty did not seem so very bad
To this stalwart and handsome young New England lad.

For he had seen Katrina, the daughter young and gay,
As he laid down his things, and glad he was to stay.
The Yankee was a prisoner to a Holland maid
So thanked his lucky stars the journey was delayed.
Though the father wouldn't let his daughter have a beau,
(He wanted her to stay at home and work, you know),
This maiden gave the Yankee all her trusting heart
And e're the day had gone they'd vowed to never part.

Katrina had a thousand dollars in the bank,
Left by her mother for a dowry of rank,
And this cruel Dutch parent was the sole trustee—
Trust him not to give it to any bold Yankee.
So while the two were planning to elope that night
Aaron was scheming hard to get the cash in sight.
At last the Yankee offered five shillings to pay
For Van der Donk's consent to pass by on his way.

'T is as hard in these days as in the days of old
For any Dutchman to refuse good Yankee gold.
Maybe he suspected the Yankee liked his lass,
For Van der Donk consen.'d to sign the young man's pass.
Then the Yankee wrote, the quill shaking in his clinch
One "pass" in good English and one in Holland Dutch.
To all intents and purposes they were the same:
The Justice read the Dutch one and signed each with his name.

When Glenville First Went "Dry"

OW alcohol's banished and taverns have vanished
Within Glenville township border.
An election crusade now they drink lemonade,
(And kegs from Schenectady order.)
This whisky defeating was history repeating
For Glenville went dry long before:
And this is the story, in plain allegory,
From out of historical lore.

'Mong the town's occupants were Irish immigrants
Who came into Glenville one day;
On the Wolf Hollow road they cheerfully abode,
In little log huts by the way.
They raised tubers and pigs and were radical Whigs,
Like every true son of the Isle:
For fighting and frolic and things alcoholic
They had the Dutch beat by a mile.

And among them there dwelt a graybearded old Celt
Who potato whisky could make.
So he sat up a still in the town of Glenville
And opened it up with a wake.
Oh, the booze that he brewed was volcanic and crude—
It tasted of tubers and oil,
And each sparkling bubble was filled full of trouble,
While a drink would start a mad broil.

But this whisky "fireish" just suited those Irish—
They each drank a quart every day.

On holidays and such they would all drink too much
And pummel each other away.
With their systems quite filled with this trouble distilled
Through Glenville they'd stampede at night,
With shillalahs flying and curses a-crying
A-looking for Dutchmen to fight.

Now the Irish and Dutch love each other too much
To live in peace and in quiet.
This quarrelling and fighting, this gouging and biting,
Made one continuous riot;
'Til one August morning, without any warning,
A thoroughly determined Dutch dame
In grim emulation of Mrs. C. Nation
Of latter day history and fame,

Unknown to the patrons led forth some Dutch matrons
To destroy the troublesome still.
With hatchets clutched tightly and stepping quite lightly
Fared forth these Dutch dames of Glenville.
The Celts had partaken too much to awaken
When they broke the door with a crash;
A candle was lighted and nothing was slighted
But everything broken to smash.

Without any stopping they kept right on chopping
And spilling the whisky around,
Then before they retired the building was fired
And it burned right down to the ground.
One Celt superstitious heard a noise suspicious
As homeward he came in the dawn,
And he afterwards swore he saw witches a score
Following a big **leprechawn*.

*Evil spirit of Irish folk lore.

Now the Irish won't stay where the wierd witches play,
Or goblins make merry and jest.
A-packing they started and quickly departed.
Up the trail towards the wild west.
And the ruins of the still can be seen in Glenville
To vouch for the truth of this tale.
But if you go near it and ask for the "spirit"
The Justice will lodge you in jail.

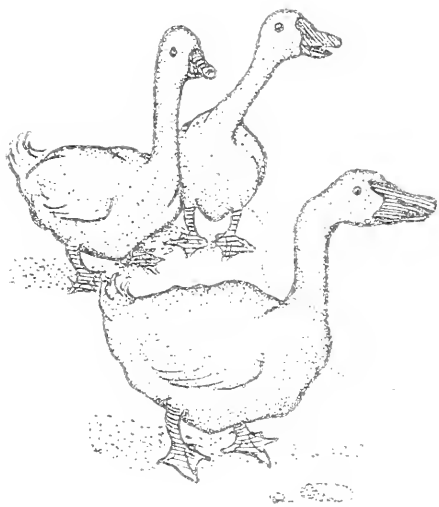
Tom Harman

In Old-Time Dorp

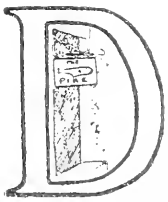
Author's Note.—The favorite amusement of young men in the early days of Schenectady was to deplete the hen-roosts of the neighborhood for mid-night feasts.

IN old-time Dorp, of long ago,
Those Hôland Dutch, the day yet bright,
Would lock the chicken coop up tight:
While stock was left for friend or foe,
Great care they took of fowls, as though
They feared sometime a mid-night flight:
In old-time Dorp.

Those old Dutchmen were not so slow:
They knew young men, e're it was light,
Were wont to rob the roosts at night
To hold a feast by campfire's glow—
In old-time Dorp.



The First Tavern in Schenectady

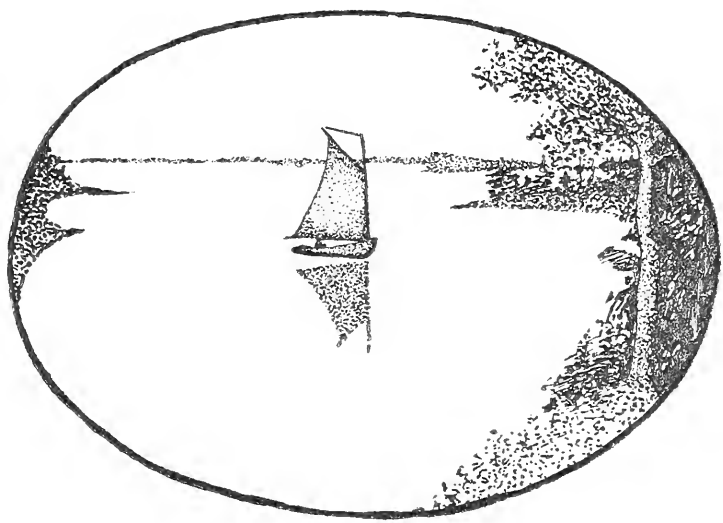


O you know that Ackes Cornelise Van Slyck
Ran the first little tavern, "The Sign of the Pike",
Where a Dutch *Burgher* could find good victuals to eat
Or spend a few guilders his old comrades to treat?
For the cellar was full of fine sausage and kraut,
And barrels of brown ale, Holland gin and good stout.
The mugs were of pewter, there was sand on the floor;
And you ran up a bill it was chalked on the door.
Oh, the rug-a-chug-chugs of the old pewter mugs,
As each Dutchman emptied his stein,
Kept barmaids a-going,
Brown ale a-flowing,
From kegs to the tables of pine.

When Albany fur traders came out of the west,
They haul'd up their birch canoes and stopped for a rest
And a mug of cool ale at the little Dutch inn—
Or if the weather was cold they drank Holland gin.
And young German lads from the flats of Schoharie,
After their purchasing with Van Slyck would tarry,
To join with the travelers in general debate,
Discussing the issues of each borough and state.
Oh, the ratty-tat-tattle of the watchman's rattle—
They gave small heed to the warning:
Those boisterous, roisterous chaps
Who sang over their *schnapps*
'Til wee sma' hours o' th' morning.

Sometimes the wild Mohawks from their castle would come
To barter their peltries and fresh game for good rum.

With three drinks of whisky they'd be shouting for France
And in the little bar room they'd do the war dance.
They would top off their load with a pint of mixed ale
And defy all the soldiers to put them in jail.
Then Van Slyck would yell out, when they made too much noise:
"Donder und blitzen! Rouse mid ter dam Iroquois!"
Such slashing and crashing and furniture smashing.
When the Whites sailed into the Red;
Then the Dutchmen victorious
Would get good and glorious,—
And the Watch would put them to bed.



The Ballad of Kon-morrigh-wok-gu-na
The Finder-of-Fault

To inspect Schenectady's fortress and gates
At the risk of his body and neck.
He came in town by Conniskayuna,
(Meaning Great Fields of Corn),
Past the hut of Ronworrighwokguna,
Hungry, tired and forlorn.
The Fault-Finder lay too ugly to sleep—
Outside he heard the leaves crackle.
Getting up he saw an Indian creep
To the house of Jans Von Brakkle.

A true Hollander was Jans Von Brakkle
Who loved his good pipe and his ease.
He invited the Indian to tackle
A huge wooden bowl of stewed pease.
Good feeder himself the Dutchman stood by
And watched the barbarian eat;
Not suspecting he was feeding a spy
Who was hollow down to his feet.
'T was plain that the Indian's appetite
Had grown all way from Quebec;
They say the food that he put out of sight
Lacked not a split pea of a peck.

"*Meijn Got*", groaned the Dutchman, "*Meijn Beve Got!*
'T is hungry you goes from mine house!
Und youse come again a skipple I'll pot,
Und open a keg of pig-souse."
Outside the hut stood the Finder-of-Fault,
An eye to a crack in the wall;
He recognized the guest as Jules Renault,
A half-breed spy from Montreal.

With a thankful grunt the spy started out
On the Dorpian trail post-haste;
The Grumbler followed bemoaning about
"A peck of good pease gone to waste!"

Alone sat the Dutchman, hungry and sad;
He took up a pinch in his belt;
"Ice watch," he moaned, "It allows he feel pain
Mid all of dot under his pelt."
Just as he spoke something thumped on the door
And bounced around on the planks,
And a voice yelled in through the open door:
"Reverrighwokguna asks no thanks
For bringing the head of your Eater-of-Peas;
Food is wasted when death is nigh;
Better a Dutchman sat taking his ease
Than wasting good pease on a spy!"

Te-que-se-ra

MOHAWK Warriors
Oft did seek
Te-que-se-ra—
"Color Creek".
To dig the red clay
For face paint—
Tribal costume,
Old and quaint.

Gone forever
The red men,
Who dug red clay
In the glen,
By the chasm
of the rill—
Te-que-se-ra,
In Glenville.

The Ballad of the Sixpence

He lurched to the bar with a satisfied chuckle—
Though his laughter was mirthless and strange;
And he laid down his threepence and drank up his beer,
While Yohn looked for the "vooman", which did not appear.
And handed him back three pennies change.

And thus it continued through the long autumn day,
The sharp Yankee kept drinking his sack;
Yohn watched for the "vooman" to make no mistake.
Then took in the silver with an impatient rake
And always gave three pennies back.

It was late in the evening when Von Horn returned
Awful thirsty and tired from the hunt.
And he drank a big beer e're he opened the till:
"Och! vot is dose here, Yohn," he cried, "dat seem to fill
Der cash draw from der back to der front?"

"Sixpences," answered Yohn, "der trade sure has been fine."
"Sixpences," echoed Conrad Von Horn.
"*Donder und blitzen!* You take all dose for sixpence!
From who, hein?" he bellowed in sudden violence.
"Och, I'm ruined as sure as your born!"

"I take dem from der tall fellow mid der viskers
Who drink mud himself all der long day."
Answered the yokel with Dutch innocence sublime.
"*Der teufel!* You give him der right change every time?"
"Yah, Yah, he vas all der time goot pay."

"*Der teufel* catch der scheming Yankees!" groaned Von Horn
As he counted his pile of threepence.
While with a load that defied all gravitation
Lay the Yankee in frightful inebriation
Fast asleep beside his cottage fence.

Ballade of Ye Ancient Pasture

Author's Note.—Less than a hundred years ago that portion of the city above Barrett street was a common cow pasture.

"GOD speed thee mine Ancient Father,
And give thee a good day,
Wherefore now the cause, I pray you,
So sadly here you stay?
And why do you keep such gazing
Forever up the street?
What kind of beast or man be it
That you do hope to meet?"

"Chill tell thee by my halidome
That sometime thou hast known,
Zome vair and goodlie pasture lande
With meadow grasse well grown.
It was a place where cows did feede,
And other stock as well—
Each morn and night, a-down ye streete,
They walked with tinkling belle."

"Thus I must tell thee, Father,
In truth and veritie,
Why this fair and goodlie pasture
Thou canst not now days see.
Here in this spot beyond the park,
The ancient pasture lay
Where all these rows of buildings stand
Along the street today."

"Ah, ah, I know thee now my mann:
Quite plainlie do I zee,
A low fellow of mean learning
That thou art cozening me.
For how could so large a pasture
Be hid by buildings now!
Why, it was onlie yesterday
I hither drove my cow!"

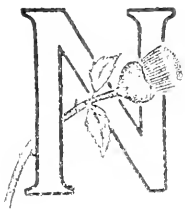
"Then I must tell thee, Good Father,
And you must understand,
That pasture vanished long ago—
And eke some other land.
This town has grown to thrice its size,
And spreads out year by year—
Though you walked to Niskayuna
No cowbells would you hear."

Love Apples

IN the gardens,
Long ago,
Mid the flowers
Used to grow
Fair "Love Apples"
Crimson red,
They were poison,
So it was said,
[illegible] see but
Not to eat—
These "Love Apples"
Fair and sweet.

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
Red and sweet."
Never knowing
That [illegible]
The "Love Apples"
History tells
[illegible] thought [illegible]
Long ago—
Just the common
Tomato.

Old "Sandy Kelley"



OW "Old Sandy" Kelley was Scotch he was;
A Presbyterian faithful and true.
His body was raw-boned, rugged and lank,
And his hair an autumnal hue.

"Sandy" by trade was a mason, he was,
And for six long days he would work:
The seventh he'd rest, as good Christian should,
And go to the little stone "kirk";

Where the minister preached four hours, he did,
Of hell and its horrors of fire;
Oft he did pray for a half-hour, or more,—
There was neither music nor choir.

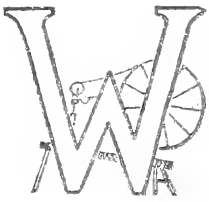
"Old Sandy" helped with the singing, he did,
In a full voice, blurry and strong.
But still the singers would get out of tune
And discord would mar the whole song.

'Til the parson a "pitchpipe" bought, he did,
To catch and to hold every note
And keep the singing harmonious, and good,
Even from "Sandy's" rugged throat.

Next Sabbath "Sandy" went to church, he did,
And sat in the very front pew,
Ready to join in the opening hymn
Soon as the parson read it through.

Old Dutch Nursery Rhymes

How the Dutch Matrons Went Calling



HEN the wives of sturdy *Burghers*
Went to call upon a neighbor,
Took they their work with them and staid
All the long winter afternoon.
At one the Dutch matrons would leave
Their snug little gable-roofed cots,
One carrying a sewing basket;
Another a bag and her knitting;
While perhaps another good "*vrouw*,
Carrying a small spinning wheel,
Would be by a black slave followed.
Cleanly and fashionably clad they were;
Wearing French high-heeled shoes with buckles;
Blue stockings, with a gore of white
On either side of the ankle;
A calimanco petticoat;
A chintz short gown, with black ribbon
Around the waist; checkered apron;
A high-crowned cap of dainty white,
While outside hung a large pocket
From a belt, rich with patch working.
At a neighbor's home they'd gather
To sit and spin and knit and talk—
For Dutch dames were great gossipers.
At four o'clock luncheon was served
On the round table, carefully spread
With the whitest of homespun linen,
And bedecked with shiny silver.
Among other dainties they served
Black tea, maple sugar, pot cheese,
Plates of butter, olykoecks, wafiles.

Kullas and numerous Dutch goodies.
Then the smiling hostess would say:
"*Kom u erouwde sit nee bijf*"
And each hungry guest would sit down
While a slave girl passed two teapots,
One of hot water, one of tea.
After the refreshments eaten
Each dame would return to her own,
Picking her way along the street;
Stopping to speak to a neighbor;
Making a small purchase or two
At the stores she passed on her way.
But ever hastened she homewar'
In time to get the evening meal
For the men returned from their work.

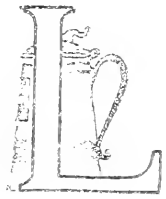
The Rhyme of An Ancient Man

AR from shirking I was working, heedless of the flying time;
Type keys clacking, brain cells racking, pounding out this bit of rhyme;
When I heard a noise behind me as I stopped a while to scan,
And I whirled about astonished to find an ancient man.
He was smiling most beguiling as though laughing at my fears,
In his prehistoric costume dating back three hundred years,
And his wrinkled face just twinkled as he sank into a chair.

"Who are you", I cried, "why came you here to give me such scare?
I'm quite perplexed and somewhat vexed that you interrupt this tome,
But now you're here you ghostly Dutchman just make yourself at home!"
He just snorted and retorted in the purest of Low Dutch:
"Though I'm hoary I've a story, though it really ain't so much.
I went sailing and a-whaling, and I worked some at the bench,
'Til 1656 when I soldiered 'gainst the wicked French.
Though quite plucky, most unlucky, I was always getting shot:
'Til half o' me, don't laugh a me, was human and half was not.

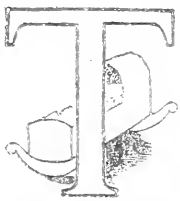
It was then I settled down in Niskayuna with a wife:
Most alarming kind o' farming, with the Indjuns full o' strife.
Without warning one fine morning, I'd been out late with th' boys,
I found myself quite surrounded with a band o' Iroquois.
With such shooting and such hooting I was close to getting hurt,
Though I wore a suit o' Spanish mail beneath my leather shirt.
They surrounded me astounded when they see I wouldn't die,
And the painted chief near fainted when I handed him an eye.

Old Dutch Toast



ONG may you live;
Much may you give;
Happy may you die,
And inherit the Kingdom
Of Heaven bye and bye.

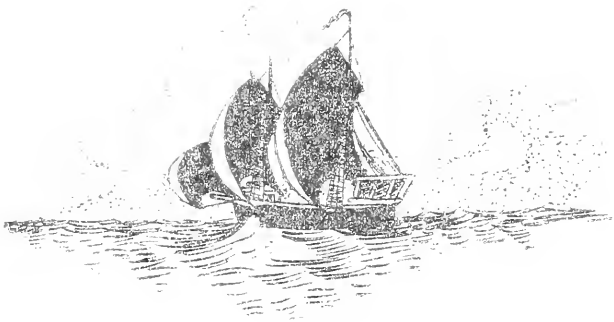
Old Dutch Nursery Rhyme



RIP, a trop, a trontjes,
De varkens in de boontjes:
De koetjes in de klaver;
De paarden in de haver:
De eendjes in de water-plas:
De kalf in de lang gras:—
So groot mijn kleine poppetje was.

Freely Rendered:

Trot, trot, trot, on your little throne
The piggies are in the beans;
The heifers are in the clover,
The horses are in the oats:
The ducklings are in the pond;
The calf is in the long grass:—
So big is my little darling.



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